

Connect

Tribunals Review Newsletter



Edition three February 2009

A message from Julie Grantham

Welcome to the third edition of *Connect*, the e-newsletter written especially for tribunal staff, members and stakeholders affected by the creation of the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT).

As we begin 2009, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome some new faces to the Tribunals Review project team; Melinda Standfield, Vanessa Sandhu and Belinda Delacour (Marketing and Communications Team), Gayle Jolly (Change Manager), and Paula Jahnke (Transition Lead). All bring a wealth of experience to the project, and the department.

I realise staff are waiting for the release of Mercer's report into the organisational design of the QCAT registry. While the report will recommend a structure for the registry, it is the workforce management plan that will identify how each position will be filled. The department is currently reviewing Mercer's report to consider these issues and the most appropriate way to fill each position.

For this reason, Mercer's report will be released at the same time as the workforce management plan. While we had hoped to release this information in early 2009, it is important to give staff specific details about how each position will be filled. I believe it is more important to give staff the right information at the right time so they can move forward with confidence and certainty.

There is going to be a lot of change ahead. While this may be unsettling, please be assured that you will be given support to assist you as much as possible. It is also important to remember that we need to work together to fully realise the benefits of amalgamation.

I encourage you to stay informed, discuss issues and concerns, get involved, support your co-workers and provide feedback to the project team.

I thank you for your continued support.

Julie Grantham
Director-General
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Staff information session update

Our third round of staff information sessions were held on 26, 27 and 28 November 2008.

These sessions included a presentation on Mercer's preliminary observations from their consultation process. The key design principles, functions necessary in the QCAT registry and potential areas and benefits of centralisation were outlined and discussed. You can access a copy of Mercer's preliminary observations document on the Tribunals Review website www.tribunalsreview.qld.gov.au.

Participants also had an opportunity to learn about the regional and rural delivery plan that is currently being developed. The plan will consider the most effective way to deliver tribunal services to regional and rural users. The plan is being developed in stages and includes:

- current arrangements
- options for consideration
- recommendations.

A reference group has been formed to help develop the plan and will meet in February.

Our next round of staff information sessions will be held in March.

Session details will be circulated to staff as soon as they become available.

Business processes update

Four new tribunals have moved onto the new case management system for QCAT, CaseWorks. These are the Children Services Tribunal, Misconduct Tribunal, Fisheries Tribunal and the Independent Panel of Referees.

In addition, the registry support for the Misconduct Tribunal and Independent Panel of Referees is now being provided by the Commercial and Consumer Tribunal.

While these are small tribunals, their transfer onto the new case management system will help streamline QCAT's commencement on 1 December 2009. This reduces the risk associated with a large simultaneous change of case management systems and means stakeholders are participating during the whole implementation period.

New procedures which will be required when QCAT commences are currently being developed. The areas of focus for these procedures include:

- identifying areas to improve current business operation
- coordination of scheduling activities
- implementing the case management tool.

Our business analysts, Steven Raphael and Sharon Pullar, will be contacting each tribunal to talk about current business processes to ensure that they are captured for QCAT.

Principles for success

In their preliminary work, Mercer identified 12 principles that will underpin the design of the QCAT registry:

- client focus
- readiness and timeliness
- accessibility
- state wide service delivery
- catering for all matter types
- centralisation
- continuous improvement
- efficient processes
- capacity building
- flexible work allocation
- strengthening management capability
- clear lines of separation between the president, members and registry.

To find out more visit the publications page on the tribunals review website.

Dealing with change

Change is coming and we need to prepare ourselves. We all react differently and at different times to the effects of change. Thinking about the way you, as an individual cope with change will help to develop successful strategies.

Some things to reflect on:

- Do you embrace change?
- Do you hope the change will go away?
- Do you avoid making changes?
- What skills do you use to deal with change?
- Do you need to enhance your skills?



Survey results now in

Last year, those tribunals with amalgamating registry staff were invited to complete an anonymous change readiness survey. The survey was designed to measure how prepared staff are for change and how well the project team is communicating the purpose, details and goals of the amalgamation.

The project team received 58 responses from a possible 100. You can access a copy of the results on the tribunals review website www.tribunalsreview.qld.gov.au.

While the results indicate staff are highly committed to making the amalgamation a success, they also suggest the project team needs to do more to help staff understand what exactly will change and how QCAT will be different to the tribunals it replaces.

This work will be undertaken by Gayle Jolly, who has joined the project team as a Change Manager. Gayle will also be working with tribunals, and individuals where necessary, to help them prepare for amalgamation.

Staff will have another opportunity to complete the survey in May and November this year. Re-administering the survey will help identify if and how responses have changed over time. However, your feedback is welcome at any time of the year as it helps us identify what you need and how best to assist you.

Marketing and Communications Team update

Website development

Feedback is currently being sought from registry staff on what they would like included on the new QCAT website. At the same time, a project proposal is being drafted which will take into account the results of the consultation process as well as the proposed content and information structure of the website.

The tribunal's website address has been approved and registered. From 1 December 2009, Queenslanders will be able to access information on QCAT at www.qcat.qld.gov.au. Clients accessing tribunal websites affected by the amalgamation will be redirected automatically.

Corporate identity

QCAT's corporate identity is being developed over the next two months. As with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's image, QCAT needs to appear approachable without being informal. Tribunals are less formal than courts and it is important that QCAT's identity embodies this.

The tribunal should be positioned as a contemporary organisation, one that is adaptable to future pressures and able to deliver quick and fair outcomes in a continually evolving marketplace.

Words to be used in the marketing materials to describe the service QCAT provides will include: independent, fair, just, efficient, accessible, expert, law, flexible, resolution, open, contemporary and communication.

Legislation update

The legislation to effect QCAT is currently being developed by officers from across government. This is a collaborative exercise involving legislation and policy officers from nearly every government department, the Office of Queensland Parliamentary Counsel and of course the tribunals review project team.

It is a significant task involving the creation of the Bill that will establish QCAT as well as amending over 160 pieces of legislation that will give QCAT jurisdiction.

Drafts of the QCAT Bill 2009 and the QCAT (Jurisdiction Provisions) Amendment Bill 2009 have been released for public consultation.

The Bills have been placed on the Tribunals Review website www.tribunalsreview.qld.gov.au and an email sent to stakeholders notifying them of their availability. The consultation period closes on 27 February. Feedback from stakeholders will be used to refine the legislation.

Stage 2 report now available

The independent panel's stage two report on the legislative changes needed to establish QCAT was approved by Cabinet in late 2008 and is now available on the tribunals review website.

The panel is now preparing its third and final report which will focus on QCAT's operational implementation requirements. This report will be delivered to the Queensland Government in March.



Focus on: Retail Shop Leases Tribunal

In this edition, we turn our focus to the Retail Shop Leases Tribunal and chat with the Acting Registrar, Paul Jarrett.

What is the role of the tribunal?

Administration of the *Retail Shop Leases Act 1994* which sets out retail lessees' (tenants) and lessors' (landlords) rights and obligations in retail shop leases. The Act also provides for the resolution of retail tenancy disputes through the processes of mediation and tribunal processes.

Who typically uses the tribunal?

Retail lessees and lessors who are in written lease situations.

What does a typical day involve?

Providing information on the *Retail Shop Leases Act 1994* to the retail sector and related industries, informal dispute resolution activities, administrative processes required under the Act, awareness and education activities and the conduct of mediation and tribunal matters.

Where is the tribunal currently located?

Level 10, 259 Queen Street, Brisbane.

How many registry staff does the tribunal have?

There are presently three permanent staff and two part-time staff members.

How many members does the tribunal have?

There are 28 mediators contracted throughout Queensland. The tribunal panel of members consists of three part-time tribunal legal members (chairs) and 14 part-time members. Of the part-time members, eight are representatives of retail lessees and six represent lessors.

What happens when a matter is referred to the tribunal?

If mediation is unsuccessful, a tribunal chair will determine if a dispute can proceed and if so, set the dispute down for a directions hearing.

What types of hearings does the tribunal have?

Mediations, directions hearings, conciliation hearings and tribunal hearings.

How will QCAT improve the delivery of your tribunal services?

QCAT will provide an easier and more identifiable gateway for clients to access our services as well as providing better access to regional facilities.

What would you like other amalgamating tribunals to know about your tribunal?

All staff members display a genuine interest in contributing to a more harmonious retail sector.

What's the best part of working for the tribunal?

The opportunity to help people resolve their differences through the dispute resolution processes. I also enjoy the variation in duties from office to field work. This ranges from visiting lessees and lessors to discuss their problems to conducting awareness activities to provide current information.



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